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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SANAA 000649

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [KMCA](#) [KMPI](#) [YM](#)  
SUBJECT: AN UNDECIDED JMP KEEPS ON POSTURING

REF: SANAA 1820

Classified By: Ambassador Thomas C. Krajeski for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary. After a four-month dispute with the Supreme Council for Elections and Referendum (SCER), the Joint Meeting Parties (JMP) opposition party coalition continues to demand that the SCER balance thousands of its GPC-affiliated employees with JMP loyalists. The JMP claims that this will insure that the commission will be a neutral arbiter during the August local council and presidential elections. The JMP refuses to show any willingness to compromise, however, considering their demands come late in the current election cycle. End Summary.

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So What Do They Want Exactly?  
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¶2. (U) In a March 7 press conference, the JMP, announced that it was prepared to take "necessary measures" and "mobilize the street" if the SCER did not "reform itself" before the upcoming elections (ref. A). The statement follows a four-month unresolved dispute between the SCER and JMP over a litany of issues surrounding the political affiliations of SCER employees, as well as committee and commission members. During the conference, the coalition also declared that the SCER and ruling General People's Congress (GPC) party had the responsibility to ensure "free, impartial and fair elections," and demanded necessary political guarantees of an "appropriate climate" for elections. It did not, however, declare what it would do if its demands were not met.

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Four Months and Counting  
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¶3. (U) The dispute began in November, 2005 when the SCER announced that financial and logistical constraints would limit the deployment of election and registration monitoring committees during the 2006 elections. The JMP, headed by Islah, reacted by alleging foul play and threatened to boycott the elections. Headed by the National Democratic Institute (NDI), international donors mediated substantial SCER concessions, including a revocation of the November pronouncement and a guaranteed 33% JMP representation on key commissions and committees that would oversee election complaints and voter registration.

¶4. (C) Despite these victories, in the eleventh hour the coalition unexpectedly placed a new demand on the SCER by insisting that its entire staff of 33,000 also be changed to reflect equal party representation before the elections. International observers view this as impossible so close to Election Day. Caught in a deadlock and without international support, the parties within the JMP are split on what countermeasures they should take. Reports indicate that Islah will still participate in the elections, but not in the

electoral administrative process. Serious infighting within the Yemen Socialist Party has prevented it from issuing any official response. Reports on what reactions the other coalition parties will take change daily.

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Ambassador Meeting: No Clear Answers  
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¶5. (C) In a meeting with Ambassador on March 4, the Islahi leadership could not clarify the matter. When urged by Ambassador to fully participate in the upcoming elections by "fighting for every seat and having people in the room to at least document violations," the leadership broke out in rancor citing past SCER violations. "Enough with compromising," yelled SYG Mohammed Yadoumi, "we want to participate but the government doesn't want to change anything."

¶6. (C) Assistant SYG, Abd al-Wahab al-Anisi asked how anyone expected the JMP to provide the SCER with sufficient committee participants for a sham election. Anisi continued, "We can only participate if the SCER is a neutral referee." Countering Ambassador's remark that it was too late to press for such a sweeping reform, Islahi Political Director Mohammed Qahtan said that the JMP has in fact been trying to negotiate this change for two years. Murad Zafir, an NDI program officer involved with the mediation, confirmed this but characterized the efforts as "sporadic discussions." Ambassador assured the leadership that the international community would play its role by neutrally monitoring the election. "I am just not sure if we can take another seven years of this injustice," replied Yadoumi.

SANAA 00000649 002 OF 002

¶7. (C) Comment: The JMP's unexpected eleventh hour demand has put it in a difficult situation. It could back off from its final demand and look weak or stay in what is, at this point in the election cycle, a losing battle. The JMP's apparent indecisiveness and needless posturing is due to its failure to find a strong presidential candidate and to fractiousness among its member parties. Rather than secure its victories and come up with a slate of strong candidates, it is disappointingly apparent that the coalition is finding comfort in wasting its time and resources on doing what it does best: arguing with the SCER and GPC. End Comment.  
Krajeski